Modi Regime Has Failed But Will The Opposition Rise?

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By **Abhay Kumar** - April 3, 2019

With the announcement of the dates for the 2019 General Elections by the Election Commission of India last week, the five-year term of Narendra Modi-led BJP government has come to end. An end that many felt was long awaited. Given the socially divisible and regressive standpoint of the outgoing regime, many ask will the Modi regime be ousted from the power. No doubt, the incumbent government faces widespread discontent of the masses as it has failed to fulfil its promises of *achhe din*. But it is a hard fact that *'parivartan'* [change] does not come on its own. To make any change, radical questioning, active resistance and intervention are essential.

That is why, any prediction about the results of the upcoming elections, the favourite pastime of popular media and idle intelligentsia, should not be the sole preoccupation here. Rather, it is more important to present an honest and sincere picture of the prospects of a *united opposition* against a *united ruling front*.

While the ruling regime is spending huge money and resources to propagate its "achievements" and divert the attention of the voters from its failures to emotive issues, the opposition parties are trying hard to clinch an alliance, resolving deadlock over the seat-sharing. The opposition knows it very well that the best way to take on the ruling alliance is to wage a united fight. As the results of the previous elections have been any indication, the united alliance of the opposition (*mahagathbandhan*), as seen in the 2015 Bihar assembly elections and the Uttar Pradesh by-elections in 2018, triggered the humiliating defeat of the BJP, snatching the "halo" around Modi.

The news pouring in from several places indicates that the opposition parties are trying to resolve their differences over the seat-sharing. The opposition parties are well aware of the fact that clinching a "fair" deal to the satisfaction of all will be half-work done. They are confident that the voters are looking for an alternative to the Modi regime as last five year saw imposition of anti-people policy one after the other. In short, most of the promises Modi made in the previous elections remain unfulfilled. Needless to say, workers, farmers, small traders, students, Dalits, Adivasis, lower castes, minorities, Kashmiris, women etc. have been hard hit by the Modi government's policies. The Modi government and their electoral managers are acutely aware of this political treachery and are devising a slew of measures to counter the anticipated popular reaction. Politics under democracy, as many know through their experiences, is fundamentally about anticipation. A vast industry has emerged around the management of anticipation. The opposition parties and their promised united front must give voice to popular opinion against the industry of the management of the popular discontent. However, it would require much more than a mere electoral alliance.

In other words, the opposition should not shy away from taking the problem head-on. The farmers across India repeatedly marched to the national capital, covering hundreds of miles, to register their protest. The farmers from Tamil Nadu even brought the skulls of their fellows who had committed suicides, to shake the national conscience but they were met with the brute state force. A key demand of farmers has been fair prices of their products. Instead of listening to them, the government further introduced neo-liberal policies. While it gave millions of rupees to big corporate, in the name of promoting business, it remained and remains reluctant to spend money on developing agricultural infrastructure. Due to continuous withdrawal of subsidies on fertilisers and other items in the last two decades, the farmers, in most of cases, ended up spending more money on seeds and fertilisers than they get in yield. As a result, the act of farming has become increasingly debt-driven activity. The only escape from this spiral of debt is unfortunately committing suicide.

Apart from farmers, the Modi regime proved a major disappointment, if not a disaster, to the working men and women of other sectors as well. For example, he promised to create millions of job opportunities, but the promises remained merely an electoral *jumla*. The experts of the labour sectors have established with concrete evidence that the unemployment rate in the current regime has been a record high. While unemployment remains high, the wages keep falling, creating condition for a slow death of a considerably large social segment. As a result, the labouring masses suffered and their lives became more precarious. Not to talk of extending social security,

the ruling regime diluted labour laws and promoted privatisation and contractualization. The exercise of war-mongering spread through the lackey media is nothing but an extension of the internal war that the government has unleashed in the interests of the corporate capital. The hullaballoo over war is but a calculated and measured move to manage the internal war, most starkly visible in socialising the war against minority and privatizing the war against the working classes.

During his election campaigns in 2014, Modi made corruption a big issue. He attacked the Congress government for indulging in corruption. But it is clear beyond doubt that Modi himself has failed to run a "transparent" government. For example, his government has been severely criticised for indulging in corrupt practices in the multi-billion dollar Rafale deal. Many others, similarly, point to corruption involved in demonetisation policy of the Modi government. While, demonetisation dealt a major blow to small sectors, it benefited big corporate, particularly those operating in cashless transactions, and politicians from the ruling parties. Now several authentic reports have come out, showing how the decision regarding demonetisation was imposed without consulting even the RBI at the behest of the corporate bosses.

Even worse was the introduction of new tax regime on the people. While the wages have fallen, the extraction of hard-earned money in the form of several taxes has increased, accentuating and generalising a social misery. Despite huge amount being extracted, the share of public spending on health, education and other welfare measures has only dwindled. All of this has contributed to increasing inequality.

The education sectors too have been hit hard by the Modi government. Instead of opening new public universities, fulfilling vacant posts, extending scholarship and promoting an atmosphere of research and inquiry, further privatisation and saffronisation of education has been forcibly imposed in spite of resistance. In the name of giving "autonomy", educational institutes and their managers are given "free" hand to privatise education further. Added to woes has been the construction and propagation of the frenzied debate of the so called "anti-national" character of the students, universities, and educational institutions. This farcical debate has been deliberately imposed and is sustained by the saffron outfits to "silence" their political and cultural opponents, and is aimed at discrediting their credible opponents in the eyes of a manufactured people. This farce allows them to divert public attention from privatisation of education.

The last five years have also been hard for the deprived sections and the minorities. While Modi is never tired of invoking Ambedkar, he, being true to his colour, has followed nothing but Brahminical-Sangh agendas. Not to talk of fluffing the vacant reserved seats for the deprived sections, reservation for the economically deprived upper castes has been brought in to kill the very idea of reservation. Millions of Adivasis, on the other hand, are now facing the threat of evictions from their own lands. The minorities, particularly Muslims, have faced the onslaught of the Modi regime. In the name of cow-protection, love-jihad, terrorism etc, they have been haunted. Given that, it is historic responsibility on the opposition parties and all other democratic forces to wage a *united* struggle united for an alternative.

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